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Part VI

Department of Education

Vocational Rehabilitation Service Projects Program for Migratory Agricultural and Seasonal Farmworkers With Handicaps; Final Priority and Invitations for Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year 1992; Notices

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Vocational Rehabilitation Service Projects Program for Migratory Agricultural and Seasonal Farmworkers With Handicaps

AGENCY: Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of final priority for fiscal year 1992.

SUMMARY: The Secretary announces a priority for fiscal year 1992 under the Vocational Rehabilitation Service Projects Program for Migratory Agricultural and Seasonal Farmworkers with Handicaps. The Secretary takes this action to focus Federal financial assistance on identified national needs. This priority is intended to improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with handicaps who are migratory agricultural and seasonal farmworkers by expediting the eligibility determination and service delivery processes, improving communications through the use of bilingual counselors, and coordinating services for these individuals across State lines to facilitate continuity and completion of rehabilitation plans.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This priority takes effect either 45 days after publication in the **Federal Register** or later if the Congress takes certain adjournments. If you want to know the effective date of this priority, call or write the Department of Education contact person.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Edward Hofler, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 3318 Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202–2649. Telephone: (202) 732–1332. Deaf and hearing impaired individuals may call the Federal Dual Party Relay Service at 1–800–877–8339 (in the Washington, DC 202 area code, telephone 708–9300) between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m., Eastern time.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Grants under the Vocational Rehabilitation Service Projects Program for Migratory Agricultural and Seasonal Farmworkers with Handicaps are authorized by title III, section 312 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The purpose of this program is to provide grants to State or local vocational rehabilitation agencies to establish service delivery systems for the vocational rehabilitation of migratory and seasonal farmworkers with handicaps. Programs must be administered in coordination with other programs serving migrant agricultural and seasonal farmworkers, including programs under title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, section 311 of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the Migrant Health Act, and the Farm Labor Contractor Registration Act of 1963. This program and the final priority selected for this fiscal year will further AMERICA 2000, the President's strategy for moving the Nation toward the National Education Goals, by assisting individuals with handicaps to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

An evaluation of this program completed in 1987 found that the migratory and seasonal farmworker population requires special services for their rehabilitation. This evaluation reported that 23 of the 50 States have a migratory and seasonal farmworker population. This evaluation highlighted the need for more bilingual counselors to work with this population.

In addition, migratory farmworkers are required to move often as the work in a particular area is completed. These frequent moves pose special problems in determining eligibility for services, providing services, maintaining agency contact, and completing rehabilitation plans. Development of innovative service models to expedite and coordinate the provision of services across State lines to this population may result in more individuals successfully completing the rehabilitation process.

On October 16, 1991, the Secretary published a notice of proposed priority for this competition in the **Federal Register** (56 FR 51962).

Note: This notice of final priority does not solicit applications. A notice inviting applications under this competition is published in a separate notice in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

Analysis of Comments and Changes

In response to the Secretary's invitation in the notice of proposed priority, five parties submitted comments. An analysis of the comments and the Secretary's responses follow. Based on the suggestion of one commenter, a change in the priority has been made to require that project directors must be knowledgeable about farm labor issues and sensitive to the special needs of the migratory agricultural and seasonal farmworkers (MSFW) population. Technical and other minor changes—and suggested changes the Secretary is not legally authorized to make under the applicable statutory authority—are not addressed.

Comments: Three commenters expressed support for this priority. One of these commenters suggested that information on assistive technology be made available to programs that serve the MSFW population.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees with the need for the effective dissemination of information on assistive technology that will enable MSFWs with handicaps to function in their accustomed employment. This suggestion will be given serious consideration in future priorities and in the provision of technical assistance to VR projects for MSFWs.

Changes: None.

Comments: One commenter from a State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency with considerable experience in serving the MSFW population recommended that the final priority include an emphasis on the recruitment of program directors who are sensitive to the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the MSFW population, and who are knowledgeable and have personal experience with farm labor issues and the needs of farmworkers with handicaps in order to provide the most effective technical assistance possible.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees that projects under this priority must give special attention to the unique qualifications of the project director as well as the other staff.

Changes: Language has been added to the final priority to require that project directors must be knowledgeable about farm labor issues and sensitive to the special needs of the MSFW population.

Comments: The same commenter also suggested that the final priority clearly encourage the use of geographic-specific pilot projects to provide enhancements to existing VR service delivery programs that will accelerate the approval process and the delivery of VR services to the migrant target population.

Discussion: The Secretary does not believe that it is necessary to add this emphasis to the present priority in order to secure service models that will expedite the rehabilitation process for MSFWs with handicaps. It is expected that with leadership, effective liaison with the business and human service communities, and technical assistance specifically geared to the MSFW population, new projects will enhance the existing VR service delivery programs in an effective and more expeditious way.

Changes: None.

Comments: Another commenter recommended that projects under this priority be coordinated with projects funded by the Office of Migrant Education as well as the Department of Labor's Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) projects.

Discussion: The Secretary appreciates the need for effective coordination of

services among Federal agencies sharing similar goals in order to maximize the total program resources and to avoid duplication of services. The Rehabilitation Act and Federal regulations for this program require that each MSFW project be administered in cooperation with other organizations having special skills and experience in the provision of services to MSFWs. The Department of Education's program coordinator for this program actively participates in regular meetings of the Federal Interagency Committee on Migrants together with coordinators of migrant education, health, and employment program staff from the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, and Agriculture. On a national level, the Federal Interagency Committee on Migrants shares program information and assists in the coordination of services provided to migrant workers on the State and regional levels. The State vocational rehabilitation agencies that administer the projects for the rehabilitation of MSFWs with handicaps are committed by the comparable services and benefits provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, to refer clients to other agencies that can provide services that are necessary to rehabilitation but are provided more effectively by another human service program. For example, State vocational rehabilitation programs coordinate closely with local JTPA projects for employment services and, if appropriate, refer VR clients to the JTPA program.

Changes: Language requiring coordination with appropriate departments has been included in a preceding paragraph of this Supplementary Information section.

Priority

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), the Secretary gives an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary funds under this competition only applications that meet this absolute priority:

Priority—Service Models to Expedite the Rehabilitation Process

Priority will be given to projects that will develop and implement service models for expediting the eligibility determination process and accelerating the provision of necessary and appropriate services to migratory and seasonal farmworkers. In view of the extreme mobility of many migratory agricultural and seasonal farmworkers and the short time that they are available for receiving services in any one location, projects must use innovative methods to accelerate the provision of services to this population, such as revising and streamlining administrative procedures, pre-approval of routine case service expenditures, and coordination of services across State lines as migrant and seasonal farmworkers follow the available work.

Projects responding to this priority also must demonstrate the use of easily administered assessment tools as a component of the service model. Efforts must be directed to the modification of these tools to assure that the instruments take into account the unique characteristics and traits of the migratory agricultural and seasonal farmworkers, such as their ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic level. Project directors must be knowledgeable about farm labor issues and sensitive to the special needs of farmworkers with handicaps in order to provide the most effective technical assistance possible to rehabilitation and related program staff. In addition, the project must utilize bilingual intake workers, liaison persons, and vocational rehabilitation counselors who are able to communicate with the particular migratory and seasonal farmworker population to be served, and who possess the knowledge of and sensitivity to the unique rehabilitation needs of this population due to its unique characteristics.

Intergovernmental Review

This program is subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79. The objective of the Executive order is to foster an intergovernmental partnership and a strengthened federalism by relying on processes developed by State and local governments for coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance.

In accordance with the order, this document is intended to provide early notification of the Department's specific plans and actions for these programs.

Applicable Program Regulations

34 CFR Parts 369 and 375.

Program Authority: 29 U.S.C. 777b.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 84.128G, Vocational Rehabilitation Service Projects Program for Migratory Agricultural and Seasonal Farmworkers with Handicaps)

Dated: February 27, 1992.

Lamar Alexander,

Secretary of Education.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[CFDA No.: 84.128G]

Vocational Rehabilitation Service Projects Program for Migratory Agricultural and Seasonal Farmworkers With Handicaps—Service Models To Expedite the Rehabilitation Process; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 1992

Purpose of Program: To provide grants for vocational rehabilitation services to migratory agricultural workers with handicaps or seasonal farmworkers with handicaps.

Eligible Applicants: State vocational rehabilitation agencies or local agencies administering vocational rehabilitation programs under written agreements with State agencies are eligible to apply for awards under this program. A State agency may, if it chooses, enter into an agreement with the State vocational rehabilitation agencies of one or more other States to develop a cooperative program for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: April 23, 1992.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: June 30, 1992.

Applications Available: March 9, 1992.

Available Funds: $289,000.

Estimated Range of Awards: $75,000–125,000.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: $96,300.

Estimated Number of Awards: 3.

Note: The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

Project Period: Up to 36 months.

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85, and 86; and (b) The regulations for this program in 34 CFR parts 369 and 375.

Priority: The priority in the notice of final priority for this program, as published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**, applies to this competition.

For Applications or Information Contact: Bruce Rose, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 3332, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202–2649. To request an application, call (202) 732–1347. To receive further information, call (202) 732–1325. Deaf and hearing impaired individuals may call the Federal Dual Party Relay Service on 1–800–877–8339 (in the Washington, DC 202 area code,

telephone 708–9300] between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m., Eastern time.

Program Authority: 29 U.S.C. 777b.

Dated: February 29, 1992.

Robert R. Davila,

Assistant Secretary, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

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